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## A COUNTRY SALE.

WHAT! a black and red poster, a garish, obtrusive posting-bill, on the gate of Crayton manor-house! What desecration! Yes; Messrs Watler and Wilson have at last actually received instructions to sell, on June 18, the valuable personal effects of Lady Mary Winford, lately deceased—‘excellent library, 1500 vols.; fine oil-paintings, bedroom furniture, table clocks, cabinet pianoforte, India screen, Chinese gong, garden-roller, and pony-cart.’

Such is a random *r  sum  * of the various lots, I see, to be viewed on Saturday before the sale, between the hours of eleven and five—catalogues to be obtained of Messrs Watler and Wilson, High Street, Crayton.

The old manor-house stands with dignified reserve about a mile on the east side of Crayton, walled in with great umbrageous elms, and quivering lime-trees, and ramparted like a beleaguered fortress, from vulgar curiosity, by a fine mossy-lichenized old garden-wall, embowered with lime trees, but mouldy as the rind of a ripe old Stilton, bulging and bowing with extreme old age, but faithful to the last to its trust. Immediately in front of the windows runs a low wall, crested with an old box-hedge, crisp, curly, and close; and in the centre of this wall, facing the front-door, with its depressed Tudor arch, is a low wooden gate, its faded blue paint blistered by several years’ sunshine, which leads by a short paved walk of cracked and rain-bleached flags to the chief entrance. I remember the dear old place ever since I was that high. I remember, when I was a boy, seeing old Sir Edward Winford, in scarlet, start for the covert, on his famous chestnut mare. I remember seeing the black procession come two by two through that same doorway, the day of his funeral. I remember his daughter Fanny’s marriage (when I was an older lad), and seeing the carriages, full of beautiful, hopeful faces, start from the same entrance; and soon afterwards the clash of the bells of the parish church sounding in the distance. Sometimes, when I pass the door now, although years and years have passed away, I can

scarcely believe that the gate has not just shut on those beautiful or those sad faces. When I was a boy, I used to think the manor-house as near a palace as a house could be.

The Lady Winford just dead was the last of the old aristocracy of Crayton, a town long since swamped by the moneyocracy and retired wealth of London. That manor-house was the last fortress that held out against the enemy, and it held out bravely too, till Death hoisted his black flag, and the citadel surrendered. Lady Winford maintained her aristocratic reserve with an income somewhat too scanty for the position at which she aimed. She made a good fight of it against the *novi homines*, by refusing them countenance; but she could not outshine their festivities, their croqu  t-parties, their soir  es, their dinners, their dances, and their music. She scorned them; they ignored her. Now she has set, and they shine on. It was a losing fight; but Lady Winford lost it with temper, and with a dignity that was almost grand, and certainly pathetic. To the last, she was affable to the poor, and scrofulous of new money.

It was rather a make-believe life of hers. She tried with her one broom to keep back the Atlantic of unknown people; but now she is gone—the Atlantic remains, a progressive fact. She tried hard to persuade herself and others that she drove a pony and donkey from eccentricity, but the fashion did not spread; and the new people prefer a couple of ponies. She tried to convince herself that no garden was so romantic as one-half nettles one-half underwood; but the new men, with their disgusting obstinacy, still went on preferring green velvety lawns, mountainous azaleas, and glowing geranium-beds.

To the last, she gave her small, high-mannered, rather cold, and pinched parties, with all the manners of Versailles. The older the furniture grew, the grander she became, and the more queenly her government of the house. Her last direction to her lawyer was to so bind up the heir (some cousin’s child) that he should never be able to move or sell any of the queer splay chairs, Japan cabinets, and bald old pictures. (The Court of Chancery soon

took this in hand, and abrogated the capriciousness of a self-willed and unchangeable old woman.) Her last words were prophetic, for she said : 'Mind what I say : after I am gone, some London cheesemonger will have this place.' She did not speak again after that ; she died with that awful future weighing upon her mind. That a London cheesemonger might be a handsome man, with good-manners, clear head, and kind disposition, educated in the best school, experience, and understanding his age better than Lady Winford herself—that never struck her ; she stood on the hill of Vision, and all she saw for the future was one debasing deluge of purse-proud, unbearable cheesemongers pouring into the desecrated homes of a moribund aristocracy—Lodge's *Peeceage* torn into cigar-lights, and a House of Commons talking in earnest of Reform.

I strolled into the manor-house on the view-day, as into a temple from which the glory was departed. A little, snubby man, a Crayton upholsterer, stood with one foot on the steps, talking of his probable purchases to an inspector of police, who seemed to have had his buttoned-up blue frock-coat sewn on to him. There was a van in the road below, waiting for some broker ; homely farmers' wives, and questioning children, were moving about the inner entrance ; while sullen, red-faced stable-lad in the background seemed half inclined to drive out the lot of us with one rush.

The low-browed hall was full of country-people and small Crayton tradesmen, eyeing, fingering, testing pictures, curtains, or tables. Robust daughters of farmers shouted to each other from room to room, or scampered up the great stairs. Old fogies of the place, unable and unwilling to buy, pored over the books, examined the Japan cabinets drawer by drawer, or tinkled the dusty glass drops of the chandeliers, in the tarnished ormolu settings—peering about with a greedy, heartless curiosity, that does not reflect the most charming side of human nature. In the long dining-room, the books are all lotted out in rows. 'Misfortune' makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows—such odd companionship : *Romance of the Forest*, and *Young's Night Thoughts*; Chapone's *Letters*, and *Diary of the Times of George IV.*; Parry on *Sheep*, and Vertot's *Roman Republic*—the drift of several centuries' literature—a scratch pack of books, the residue of the tastes and caprices of many generations—young who are now old, old who are now dead. There are moods when, in such places as this, the wisest books seem to us to have been written but to serve as the playthings of an hour.

The old hall at the manor-house, so often the welcoming-place of friends, is so low in the roof that it seems to press upon one's head, and to contract as you look upon its plaster-tracery and panelling. What a curious sense of economy in space must have haunted the old builders, just as if there had been a rent to be paid for the sky used as well as for the ground ! It may be my fancy, but the truncated satyrs, on each side of the Jacobean fireplace in the hall, long innocent of fire, seem to glower at the covetous crowds of thoughtless sight-seers that pour in through the Tudor doorway. Everything in the house appears to me to be either sad or indignant at the intrusion of the mob of people with odious catalogues in their hands. When this deluge is over, all these rarities will have to leave

their ark. The quiet society of the old squat chairs and settees, the gilt Japanned screens and old Queen Anne mirrors, is soon to be broken up ruthlessly and for ever. Like the retainers of some outlawed nobleman, they are to be scattered over the world into new homes, never to reunite. They are dumb pagan things, are cabinets and chairs, but still I pity them, for I half believe there is some sort of human instinct, some sympathy with human joys and sorrows, even in them. I pity them banished from the quiet, grave house, and in rough hands, gradually chipping and cracking, till they crumble down into mere firewood. Like faithful old servants turned out into the rough world in their old age, they are about to gain a bitter experience of the changes of fortune. Why, the very mirrors return spiteful and oblique images of the newcomers; perhaps they could not give more accurate representations of us, if they tried—but I cannot help thinking they could.

There are pictures in the embrasure of the hall-window—quaint, old-fashioned pictures and engravings ; mezzotints after Reynolds ; stately, handsome ladies, feeding poultry, or twining scarfs round a rustic altar ; pictures of stiff-backed huntsmen, in scarlet coats, riding strange, almost grotesque horses, that seem to be of wood, and cantering heavily through bald landscapes ; whippers-in, in red and blue greateats, standing like sentries upon brown plains of paint ; harsh-looking groups of flowers ; a crayon-drawing or two in the Miss Kauffman manner ; and a few indifferent landscapes. There are no family portraits. The heir, or the Lord Chancellor, or the executors, have had mercy on these (as well sell your father's grave, Lady Winford would have said) ; but the dark stains on the gray and gilt paper mark where they have been. The bow-windows in the faded drawing-room are splashed with red, for the bricklayers are at work outside, putting the old place in order for the next tenant, a City-man, who will metamorphose the ghostly old house. Looking in at the windows of a closed room on the first floor, I see goods that have been reserved by the family, lying there *perdu*, like the children of a family who are shut in while the father's coffin is being brought down stairs.

Endless nests of rooms—long, short, square, narrow, but all sad and dingy. Down the back staircase, outside the housekeeper's room, that sanctum of old china, there hang enormous lengths of family linen, looking like the shrouds of a thousand generations. There are labels on them, figured labels, of which the farmers' wives make careful notes, crumpling the folds of the sheets between their fingers and thumbs. With what quick craft they assay the web, and test the woof, that good old Lady Winford once approved with the same womanly scrutiny ! There hang the great cascades of linen, like so many enormous white flags hung out when an old fortress has surrendered—say an old French fortress to a revolutionary mob.

Now, with the spirit of knight-errantry upon me, I track the auctioneer from bedroom to bedroom—first, the Bow Bedroom ; then the Blue Room, north chamber, north-west chamber ; then, by a quaint covered bridge, to the west wing, and more low-ceilinged, dusky bedrooms—littered with mattresses, and large, wallowing hulks of featherbeds—that make the house look as if it had been turned into a soldiers' hospital, and then

abandoned, as the army marched on ; such quaint, ghostly rooms, looking out on small courtyards, and broad, gold-spotted meadows, stretching to a mill-stream ; and neglected gardens, snowy with Guelder-roses ; and lawns strewn with rough outdoor lots for sale.

There are Japan chests with dimmed gilding, and large enough to hide that skulking Italian, Iachimo, himself ; and Japan cabinets, with nests of drawers for jewels ; and great china cisterns, rich in their deep enamelled colours. But the chairs—such chairs!—squat, with broad round seats, and broad white-railed backs, and bandy legs, placed formally round the old-fashioned rooms, in a sort of parliament or congress, ready for the pale ghosts in flowing sacques and rustling lutestring silks, that certainly must by midnight, in the silence of moonlight, when the leaves without make patterns on the floor, glide in, and seated upon them, rehearse the moments of their long-past lives. I almost imagine I hear even now, at noonday, the tap-tap of the high heels, or the sound of the ivory-headed sticks touching the banisters, as I stand alone in the Yellow Chamber, looking at the old furniture of the half-dismantled house ! Live in such a place!—sleep in such a place ! Why, I should wake in the night, and shake like a jelly at every squeak behind the wainscot, every creak of the weathercock above, every rumble down the chimney, every whistle through the keyhole ! Lucky Arabs who live in streets, for their family ghosts cannot get fixed to a particular parish, and so are left behind, a trouble to no one. Surely old Lady Winford's ghosts will never descend to appear to disturb the slumbers of a rich cheesemonger.

More garrets and forlorn, ill-lit servants' rooms, more dingy and impoverished state, more Rembrandtic glimpses of dim vaulting and cross-lighted passages and stairs, and I am in the garden; weedy gravel-walks, incrusted with moss, and lilac bushes blown down and tangled over the path ; plots of flowering-nettles, and mouldy summer-houses ; and under the lime-trees, regions of wild-parsley and hemlock, and bare, damp patches of earth. On the lawn, under the terrace-bank, are ostentatiously arranged rows of cobwebbed melon-glasses, an uprooted stone-pillar dial, a rusty garden-seat and a garden-roller, and Time's scythe is there. I know it by the notches and the shears of Atropos, and other trifles. Amid all this *débris*, this moraine of the ruin of an old family, the great purple cluster-rose on the south wall, under the window of the Yellow Chamber, expresses its joy and its love of summer in a thick veil of flowers, heartless like the rest. No one is going to take it away, or sell it, or harm it—not even the cheesemonger of the future ; and it is happy, and rejoices after its manner. The lawn, too, though not often shaved by the scythe, disports in thousands of little white-starred daisies, and in plumes of Quaker-grass, and tries to hide the general decadence of fortune with golden-rayed dandelions, that variegates its green surface.

The unpapered room, the neglected garden, all tell the same tale—the old race is gone, the fortunes of the place have changed. The house is moribund—it is slowly, surely dying, a tile at a time. Rust, decay, moth, dry-rot, and the worm are all busy. Its days are numbered. By and by, the discontented cheesemonger will pull down the

old ghost-haunted place, and build a staring Tudor house, with raw brick walls and raw stone facings.

The next day, when I entered the drawing-room, I found a very different scene. The place was crammed with ambiguous people, surrounding a long dinner-table, at which sat eight Jew-brokers as at a Barmecide banquet. At one end, and upon the table, like an Irish witness, sat an auctioneer, a little table before him, and a small ivory hammer in his hand. Porters in their shirt-sleeves were carrying in tables and chairs—yes, the old, wide, strange-shaped chairs. On a sofa, in a corner of the room, under a gilt bracket, and close to the fireplace, sat more brokers—men of more pretensions than those at the imaginary dinner-party—well-dressed, easy-mannered men, who joked and treated the whole matter playfully. The auctioneer is a smart, alert, young man ; very hot with the exertion, and very indignant at the way the sale is going. The elder partner (perhaps his father), a hearty old gentleman, sits on the sofa, and frowns and shoots out his under-lip when things don't go well, or a broker gains any special bargain.

Farmers and their bright-eyed, pleasant-looking wives push through the crowd to see the lots as they are offered ; old gentlemen, with double eyeglasses in addition to spectacles, look on with expectation. As for the brokers, there is no nonsense about them. How they pinch the curtains, and tap the tables, and slide up and down the lamps, and filip the china. There is every type of Jewish face there : the handsome English Jew, with heavy eyelids and large, melancholy eyes ; the pale, bloated Jew, with greasy, curly black hair, and short fat neck ; the grizzled, vulture-nosed old Jew, sallow and careworn as if after twenty years of gambling ; the low, greasy, voluble Jew, hard-featured and shameless ; the plausible, neatly-dressed Jew ; the young, moustached, foreign-looking Jew ; and lastly, the little, old-fashioned Jew, with gray hair and black eyebrows, looking like a solicitor, who, struck off the rolls, has taken to prey on furniture. The deluge has come indeed, poor Lady Winford ! The only unconcerned persons in the room are a puffer—who, between his vociferations, looks steadily out of window into the garden—and an old apple-faced woman, who, sitting at a table at one end of the room, is selling cherries and gingerbread-nuts. She cares no more for the dispersion than a sea-gull does for a wreck. Lady Winford's death is worth five shillings to her, or say five-and-sixpence.

Tables, fenders, dinner-services, plate-warmers, fire-screens—up they come pell-mell, and are knocked down by the vicious little ivory hammer. Dinner-service—twenty-two meat-dishes, seventy-five meat-plates, forty-nine pie-plates, twenty-four cheese-plates, &c. The auctioneer runs them glibly off. The biddings go up first by shillings, then by half-crowns. It is difficult to sum up forty half-crowns as these Jew-brokers do. They boast among themselves of the difficulty as puzzling country competitors.

'Thirty shillings—thirty-one in two places. Thank you, sir. Thirty-three—that's better. Thirty-six—forty : that's twice as good as twenty. Given away at forty—two hundred and thirty-two pieces of Copeland's tinted Queen-ware given away at forty. Forty-two. Keep on talking. Any more, Mr Solomon ? Don't lose it for half-a-crown. Any more, shall I say ? Positively going ! Have you

all done? Unless there's another bid—given away for forty-two and six. Any advance? Rap.'

'Fuller,' calls out the purchaser. The auctioneer's clerk notes the name and sum. The fat Jew glowers at him; the vulture Jew lifts up his languid old eyes in mute indignation and reproach at the absurd Gentile; foreign young Jew, in buff shirt and enormous ruby studs, whispers to him.

Indignant at brokers, the jaded auctioneer begs Mr Abrahams to get out of the way of a buhl cabinet now being brought forward by the porters through a reluctant lane made by the spectators. Mr Abrahams prevents its being seen—perhaps intentionally. He groans with comic regret; and Mr Levi produces a laugh by saying he ought to turn Ethiopian serenader.

'Silence! Attention, gentlemen!' Active bidding now—begins with five—six, seven, eight—another half-crown. Levi and Solomon are at it tooth and nail. One would really think they knew of a diamond necklace in a secret drawer. More half-crowns, till Levi suddenly stops dead beat. *Rap.* It is Solomon's; and he smiles, nods at Levi, and wipes his greasy brow.

'Why, Solomon, I thought you were going to bid till you bu'st,' says Levi disgustfully.

Sometimes a sonny-looking farmer's wife, quick, but anxious, bids in a firm voice from the point of vantage where she has ensconced herself; and there is a laugh when she rather slowly raises her offer, and betrays her eagerness. Occasionally, a clock or a set of chairs, a bust or a picture, is bid for by a local broker, who is opposed by a careless, shabby man, who does not seem to care whether he does or does not get the lot. The broker stops at a certain price with a sneer: 'Knock it down to him,' he cries; 'let him have it.'

'Half-a-crown more, Mr Solomon?' says the auctioneer. 'Given away.'

'I've done half-an-hour ago,' says Solomon contemptuously, still hot from the last race for a bargain.

'Let him have it,' says the local broker, scornful of his imperturbable adversary.

The auctioneer winces, but says nothing.

'Any advance?' Rap goes the hammer, and off slides the lot in the arms of the flushed porters.

The bidder was a paid puffer, and the lot has still to be sold. No sale, the tradition runs, can be carried on without puffers. What weary, yet insatiably greedy eyes the brokers still cast on the lots as they are one by one brought up! Unclean harpies! how they fix on old heirlooms, and carry them off in their black talons, croaking and rejoicing. What mysterious half-crowns pass between them for transfer fees, and underground trickeries of all kinds, in spite of all protests of the auctioneer's.

'Lot 474!' By your leave, gentlemen, I can bear no longer the tear and jostle; the apathy of the puffer aggravates me; the incessant rap of the ivory hammer begins to sound like an undertaker's hammer. I saunter off into the kitchen, wander into the vaulted cellars, come suddenly upon a small family of rueful, useless busts, and mouldy plaster-casts from the antique, awaiting their doom with a melancholy patience, not without a certain dumb pathos.

Faintly now (I pass into the garden) sound the shuffling feet of the trades-people in the hall, and the fatal tap of the restless and irrevocable hammer. The little heart-shaped leaves of the lime-trees

waver mournfully on their slender green pendent boughs. The uprooted dial still lies there prostrate like the stump of fallen Dagon. At a bend of the path, where the nettles are thickest, and the privet-bushes most wild and neglected, I came upon a group of the old servants, careworn and desponding. They have been watching with ineffable horror those rough, heedless feet, grinding the Turkey carpets into holes, and listening to the auctioneer, half expecting the roof to fall in, or an earthquake to swallow up the ribald brokers.

As I pass out once more into the street, I moralise on the vanity of sublunary things—pride of race and pride of wealth. I summon before me and rebuke not only the ghost of poor Lady Winford, but also the rejoicing cheesemonger. How vainly in our day does the old wealth try to ignore the new money; and how vainly it refuses to let it share its civilisation, its refinements, its traditions. Still, the broom of Mrs Partington is unable to resist the roll in of the Atlantic: the deluge comes, and will have its way; the old dikes of pride and prejudice crumble before the subtle force of progress. Chivalry, and courage, and high feeling do not remain as heirlooms in the old families. The old Lady Winfords pass away, and the world rolls on to new changes and new conditions. In time, the old wealth will become less arrogant, and the new money less purse-proud. The sooner that good time comes, the better.

#### LORD ULSWATER.

##### CHAPTER XXI.—IN THE HOLLOW WAY.

LORD Ulswater's most direct route to his home at St Pagans was one which diverged from the white down road, along which carriages journeyed to and from the abbey. By turning sharply to the right, and plunging into the defile of a very deep and narrow lane, it was possible to save a mile of the distance. This lane, however, which was one of those peculiar to the southern maritime counties, was not one fit for any vehicle more delicately constructed than a common springless cart, and was seldom made use of, even by carters, except in dry weather. In wet weather, the mud was fetlock deep at the best, and in the ruts was supposed to be bottomless, for it was a lane the roadway of which it was no one's business to repair—dusty, uneven, strewn with huge flint-stones washed from their chalky beds by the rains of long years.

The weather was beautifully fine and dry, and, after a moment's hesitation, Lord Ulswater turned into the lane, where the steep, high banks rose sheer, like chalk-walls, tapestried with brushwood and rank grass. Another person, a pedestrian, who had kept the rider in sight ever since he left the parade of Shelton-on-Sea, turned into the lane too, and followed, cautiously treading on the soft patches of green-sward that skirted the banks.

It was one of Lord Ulswater's peculiarities to ride out alone. Even in London, he rarely permitted the attendance of a groom. In the country, never. 'Servants,' he had once said at his club, the Eleusis, in one of those talkative moods to which even reticent men are now and then liable—'servants are spies. Old Q. said so, and Old Q. knew the world—or, at least, the worst part of it.' Laxington had laughed, and had moved an exception in favour of yacht-stewards, as a necessary evil; and Chirper had declared himself spy-proof, as having no secrets, or power to keep them to

himself if he had. But Lord Ulswater had been serious. He liked to ride alone; he did so now.

He rode a fine horse, bay with black points, a mettled creature fit for the park, and accustomed to the park, but very hot-tempered and troublesome for country hackwork, and that chafed a good deal at being held back, as it had been since its master left the sea-wall. But that master rode on indifferent to his steed's fretful humour, though the froth that clung to the bridle, and flecked the horse's glossy neck, and the way in which the brute tossed its head and champed at the bit, proved its restless impatience. Presently, annoyed by the flint-stones of the rough road, or snatching at some pretext for alarm, such as the rustling and chuckling scream of a black-bird in the holly hedge above, the bright bay broke out into rebellion. Not quite suddenly. The first signs of insubordination were a swerve and a plunge, and then, after a short interval, the snorting brute flung up his heels, tore at the curb, plunged again and again, more and more furiously, reared arrow-straight, and in his gathering rage fought, and foamed, and flung, reckless as the wild horse that seeks to dislodge his captor from the saddle.

It was a pretty sight, though a fearful one, too, to sensitive persons, had such been there, to watch that hot bay thoroughbred twist and writhe his supple muscular body like a fish, rearing, lashing out savagely, back-jumping, and throwing himself into attitudes seldom to be seen but in the rough-rider's department of a riding-school, and some of which Rosa Bonheur would have been glad to transfer to canvas. But there were no such sympathetic spectators there, no one at all save Bendigo Bill stealing along beneath the hedgerow; and even he, with all the glow of his hatred firing his blood, could not help uttering a surly snarl of unwilling admiration. 'What a chap that is! The devil throttle him! I wish he'd break his neck—but he won't. I've seen fellows ride out in Australia, and I thought I knew what it was; but I never did see such a man as this in my life.'

And, indeed, no stockrider, used to chase and be chased by half-wild bulls over miles of bush-leaps in the wildest part of New South Wales—none of those centaurs of the antipodes, horse-compelling as they are, could have seemed more absolutely part and parcel of his mad plunging steed than did Lord Ulswater. He was not vain of his riding, did not hunt above a dozen times in the season, and never deigned to 'show off' as some men delight to do. But the bay might as well have tried to shake off his saddle as to unseat its occupant. Lord Ulswater backed the brute as Alexander backed Bucephalus.

'Ah, that's your sort!' ejaculated the ruffian, cowering under the shadow of the hedge, as he saw the frantic horse rear up three times in succession, his fore-feet pawing the air, and each time more and more perilously. 'Ah, now you've got it!'—and as the fellow spoke, after a vain effort to recover himself, crash! the rearing horse fell back with dreadful violence upon the road—"now you've got it!"

But Lord Ulswater had not 'got it,' in the sense of the old Latin phrase, *Habet*, which Bendigo Bill had unwittingly quoted. It was only the horse that had gone crashing backwards, and it was the empty saddle that had resounded with so dead and hollow a thud upon the flinty roadway. Active, cool, and watchful, Lord Ulswater had sprung to

the ground as the horse reared for the last time, and he stood unhurt upon the turf. The animal lay half-stunned, and Lord Ulswater stooped to pick up the rein that he had let go as his feet touched the ground. For the first time, his face was turned towards Bendigo Bill; but that worthy crouched behind a bush, and was unseen.

With much composure, Lord Ulswater got the terrified horse, shaking in every limb, and completely sobered by the shock, upon its feet, and examined its legs, which proved to be uninjured by the loose stones. He patted its neck kindly enough. 'Poor fellow, you have got the worst of it!' he said in his slow, scornful way; and then, after waiting for a minute to allow the now submissive creature to recover its breath, he drew the bridle over his arm, and prepared to lead it homewards; but in this he was rudely interrupted.

Bendigo Bill, from his lurking-place behind the bush, had watched, with interest not quite devoid of a reluctant admiration, the issue of the contest between horse and rider. But when Lord Ulswater, unhurt in body, unshaken in nerve, unruffled in temper, had patted the foam-spotted neck of his four-footed servant standing beside him, panting and submissive, something in his gesture recalled to the tenacious memory of the eye-witness that night of humiliation when the champion of the East London roughs had been ignominiously defeated by a swell. There stood that very swell, smiling, calm, indomitable—Apollo condescending to disguise his glorious limbs in the ugly attire of a gentleman of the nineteenth century. It was too much for a garrotter's flesh and blood to bear.

Hastily, the scowling scoundrel thrust his hand into the right-hand pocket of his dingy flannel coat. 'All right,' he muttered; 'the old "protectioner" is here.' Mr William Hulle's protectioner was a short but heavy mace, devised for the cracking of skulls, and more anciently styled a life-preserved. It was a formidable weapon of its class, with a supple stem or handle of twisted whalebones, a weighty ball of lead at each end, and a leatherthong and loop. Grasping this murderous implement in his strong hand, Bendigo Bill crept softly on to within springing-distance, and then, with a bound that brought him to the side of his intended victim, delivered not one, but two, of such hard and spiteful strokes as no Aryan head could have sustained without fracture of the brain-pan. There was something sickening in the sound of those heavy crashing blows, dealt as by a butcher's pole-axe.

But the strokes of the life-preserved, well meant as they were, did not alight on Lord Ulswater's head. A slight accidental movement saved him from the first blow, which dashed off his hat, and fell upon his shoulder. The second spent its force upon the arm that was suddenly lifted to ward it off. Even thus endured, the blows of that pliant weapon were violent enough to warrant the confidence with which Bendigo Bill closed in, grasped Lord Ulswater by the collar and by the throat, and strove to bring him to the ground. It was a fatal mistake.

The garrotter had an artless contempt, very usual with men of his order, for the prowess of gentlefolks. Those whose fortune had assigned them to the purple-and-fine-linen category, were, as he knew, softer of skin, and less familiar with hardship than himself—*argal*, they were easily to be

worsted. Granting, for the sake of argument, that a swell might be so far educated in fistic science as to protect himself, the younger Huller was yet assured that in a rough-and-tumble wrestling-match the swell must succumb. He himself had experience to appeal to. Enthusiastic critics in Australia had declared that Bendigo Bill's hug was as the hug of a bear. Perhaps it was so; but to what could be likened the slow, pliant, resistless pressure of those arms that were now thrown around the robber's sturdy frame? Surely, to nothing so much as the gradual tightening and closing of the striped folds of some huge serpent, python or boa, enfolding its prey. Bendigo Bill struggled hard: rage, and shame, and fear, all lent him force; but his breath was going fast, his arms were pinioned to his sides, and still that terrible grasp tightened, till it seemed as if ribs and breastbone must be crushed together. He looked up.

He looked up, and then, for the first time, fear came upon him. He was a bold man, this Bendigo Bill, and had fought and murdered when his blood was up. Very ugly customers, to use his own phrase, had he gained the mastery over; and very grim visages, black and white, had glared and grinned close to his in the grapple for life or death. But he had never thus been pinned, suffocated, compressed as by some irresistible force, and yet looked up into a face as was smiling down upon him, now. No pity, no anger in those bright eyes of his antagonist; no frown on that broad white brow; and the firm, clean-cut lips were as fixed as if they had been of marble. Even then, when his own hot face was livid and purple, and his mouth gaped for the air that his labouring lungs could not supply, even then, Bendigo Bill could take speedy, terrible note, to wonder that Lord Ullswater's breath came as regularly as ever, that the colour in his cheek was scarcely deepened, and that he seemed able to crush his enemy, body and bones, upon his own breast, as if that breast had been an iron anvil. The powerful arms tightened their hold.

The torture was too much for Bendigo Bill. Black in the face, gurgling, weak as a child, he feebly gasped out the words: 'Mercy! For God's sake, spare'— Then he seemed to faint, as he had fainted in Bermuda, when he had tried to escape by swimming, and the boat picked him up, dead-beat, with the shark's back-fin waving close behind. He recovered to find himself prostrate in the roadway, with Lord Ullswater's knee upon his chest, and his own leaden mace in Lord Ullswater's hand.

'Now, my man, do you wish to say anything; because, if you do, you had better be quick about it,' said the victor, poising the heavy weapon aloft: 'I am thinking of putting a stop to your professional avocations, once and for all.'

Almost incredulous, the man looked up in his conqueror's face, and shuddered as he looked. Those cold, cruel blue eyes, that smooth forehead, that dreadful smile, made the strong, rude man's blood run as cold as the contact of a spectral hand could have done. Could his enemy really mean it—to kill him, smiling, calm, with the quiet deliberation of some cool fiend—to kill him? Why, my Lord Judge, with scarlet and ermine, would not do that. Three years' penal servitude—or five, as an old hand, perhaps—Mercy! he does mean it! All the ex-convict's doubts gave way as he saw the dangerous glitter of those eyes,

now darkening from blue almost to black, and the shadow that crept like a cloud over the fair broad brow. The mace was uplifted.

'I'll die game!' He groaned out the words rather than spoke them, as he thought the thought. They seemed the parting requiem of Bendigo Bill. He was a British bull-dog of the true tough breed, though his unlucky steps had wandered in paths of crime since he was an urchin, and learned to be a thief. He made up his mind to die.

'I'll die game!' the miserable boast of many a felon, of many a murderer, striving hard to repress a shudder as he felt the loathed touch of the hangman adjusting the cord about his neck! It was the only appropriate death-song that suggested itself, at the supreme moment, to a swan of so black a feather as Bendigo Bill. If a black Mayal in the bush had brained him with a war-club, he would not have minded that so very much. Had some ruffian companion 'knifed' him in a drunken scuffle, he could have accepted such an end with some philosophy. To be hanged, would not have seemed otherwise than as a run of unmitigated ill-luck, such as fell to the lot of few of the Ishmaelites of society. But to be knocked on the head, like a calf in the shambles, in cool, pre-meditated fashion, such a fate was less supportable, and what made it seem the more ghastly and unnatural was, that the executioner, self-appointed, should be a gentleman. Bill could not make it out. Gentlemen, so he believed, were but a mealy-mouthed and white-livered race, slow to shed blood, easily deceived. They had scruples as to the summary chastisement of his pals and himself, scruples which he despised while he profited by them. For every deserved conviction, he had had a half dozen of undeserved acquittals. When he had been at the bar of justice, it had seemed the first object of every one, magistrates, lawyers, judge and jury, of all but the abhorred police, to give the prisoner the benefit of a doubt, and discharge him. But here was a swell who had conquered him, and was about to kill him, as he had killed others, far off among the gum-trees and tea-scrub, under the Southern Cross.

The thing could be safely done, too; the garrotter knew that well. He was a man of known bad character. There were warrants out to apprehend him. Robbery with violence was his trade, notoriously. He had attacked Lord Ullswater, and if he were to receive his death-wound in the affray, the coroner's inquest would return a verdict of justifiable homicide, and the newspapers would laud the slayer's gallant conduct to the skies. Bendigo Bill's manes would be unappeased by any legal consequences. He groaned, as he saw the trap into which he had thrust himself, closed his eyes, and awaited the final blow.

'Get up, man!' It was his captor's voice that bade him rise; and the pressure of his captor's knee upon his gasping chest was abruptly removed. 'Get up, I say. I am not going to do you any harm,' repeated Lord Ullswater, stirring the prostrate figure with his foot. Incredulous, sullen, but by no means inclined to renew the fight, the beaten man arose. He stole a sidelong glance at the victor's face, and saw that the dark shadow had passed away from it, and that Lord Ullswater was eyeing him with rather an amused look of recognition.

'You and I have met before,' said John Carnac, in the easy, almost playful tone which was more

familiar to his friends' ears than any other: 'in Great Popplewell Street, was it not?—I see by your ingenuous face, my friend, that I am not mistaken. I have a remarkably good memory for a face I have seen before, a gift for which you should be grateful, for it has saved your life. I care no more for shortening the existence of a man of your class than for crushing a black-beetle, but I remembered you, and spared you on that account. Can you guess why?

No; Bendigo Bill could not guess why. At least, so monstrous did the hypothesis, that he had been spared on account of his former assault upon Lord Ulswater, appear to him, that he could only hang his head, and shift his feet uneasily, without speaking. Lord Ulswater laughed. He had a curious silent laugh, that he seemed very much to enjoy, but which created no contagion of merriment in others. 'You cannot guess?' he said quietly. 'Then I will give you the answer to the puzzle. At first, I took you for a common robber, with no higher motive than to get hold of my watch, and the few pounds in my purse; and it was not until I knew you, and felt sure that you owed me a grudge, and had done your best to repay me for the knock-down blow in Great Popplewell Street, that I resolved not to send you to your master, St Nicholas, before your time.—No; I read your thoughts; but you are mistaken. I am not going to hand you over to the police—nothing of the sort. A fellow who is capable of revenge, must have some feelings in him beyond the mere mercenary wish to clutch a handful of money, and so—Mr—Mr—What's your name?

'Hull—that's to say—leastways, they calls me Bendigo Bill!' returned that bewildered person.

'An alliterative name. It shews you to be a man who has travelled, too,' said Lord Ulswater in his strange half-jesting way. 'Well, Mr Bendigo Bill, I forgive you—go in peace. And as introductions should be mutual, I'll give you my name. I am Lord Ulswater, and a county magistrate; and I live at St Pagans, three miles from here. I mention this, in case you should not be aware of the fact, and also because, in your own interest, I advise you, as a friend, not to try my patience by a third attempt to dash my brains out.—Now, good-bye to you.'

The face of Bendigo Bill, just then, would have been a study by which Lavater might have profited: wonder, incredulity, joy, struggled oddly with other unaccustomed feelings. His rage was quite dead within him. As for the shame of defeat, he felt it no more than an ordinary Roman gladiator would have done at being thrashed by some disguised demigod, Hercules or Pollux. It was no disgrace to be beaten by such an antagonist as that, who seemed more than man. But that was not all. The outcast had been so little used to the mercy of conscious strength, so used to associate clemency with weakness, that it was not till Lord Ulswater turned to go that tears—real tears—rose to the eyes of Bendigo Bill. To be grateful, was a new sentiment to the poor fellow. His voice was almost choked as he hoarsely swore a great oath never, as long as he lived, to lay a finger on Lord Ulswater again; and more, to be that nobleman's servant to command, to the last drop of his blood; and serve him truly in anything.—'Like your dog, my Lord, if so be you'd please trust me,' he said earnestly.

John Carnac was a good judge of the sincerity of others. He took a steady look at the working of

the man's rugged face, and laid his gloved hand on the shoulder of this new vassal, who was as eager to swear allegiance as he had lately been to do murder.

'I take you at your word, my man,' he said kindly enough: 'you may help me one day, who knows? I believe you mean what you say. Are you staying at Shellton for some time?—You nod. Very good. I shall see you again. Are you in any distress for money?'

'No, I'm not, sir—my Lord—not just now,' answered Bendigo Bill, in a burst of candour, and then added: 'And my name's William Huller, and I'm known at the sign of the *Fishermen*, if wanted—so there!'

The magnanimous, perhaps self-sacrificing completeness of this avowal was heightened by the evident effort which the speaker made to blurt it out in a breath, lest he should change his mind, and vitiate the confession by a lie.

Lord Ulswater laughed again. 'I rather like you, my man,' he said pleasantly. 'I certainly must see you again. You have no sermons to fear from me; and I might be of use to you, and you to me. This little toy I return to you. Don't be too free in its employment. It is like an edge-tool—apt to hurt the owner.' And as he spoke, he gave back the captured life-preserver.—'So, now catch my horse.' The horse was grazing quietly at half-a-dozen yards away, and was easily caught; and Bendigo Bill held Lord Ulswater's stirrup as he mounted, as officially loyal in his service as any groom could have been. That crowning act of restoring the leaden 'protector,' with the confidence and the fearlessness that it implied, had quite won Bill's heart. 'He trusted me,' the man said to himself twice over, long after Lord Ulswater had unconcernedly ridden off, and after he had watched the horseman's gallant figure disappear amid the overhanging banks of the deep lane. 'He trusted me!' And with another oath, horrible in its terms, but not unchivalrous in the spirit that prompted it, to be true to his new patron, so singularly acquired, Bendigo Bill trudged back to Shellton-on-Sea.

The new patron was quite right in his estimate of the ex-convict's character. John Carnac rarely made a blunder in his judgments on the nature of those around him. He had been a born chief of men or boys, somehow, and had shewn his appreciation of other people's qualities, ever since he was at once captain of the eleven and captain of the boats at school. Huller *file* was not altogether bad; he was not by any means so incurable a case as his quasi-respectable father. He had in him the stuff of a good grenadier, of a sturdy sailor, of a policeman who should have been valued as the apple of his inspector's eye. The wild dingo that rends and gnaws live mutton at the colonist's expense might be converted, in the course of a generation's domesticity, into a decent sheep-dog. There was much of waste power in Bendigo Bill, now fervent in his new faith as a pardoned rebel, who almost worships the exceptionally generous sovereign to whom he owes life and land, royally spared, with the sunshine of a king's kindness to add grace to the boon. Lord Ulswater had gained a willing slave.

#### CHAPTER XXII.—RUTH GIVES ADVICE.

'Come home—come home—come home!' Of how many letters, written on paper or papyrus, scratched with steel stylets upon tablets of wax,

painted with a flowing brush by scholarly Chinese clerks, hieroglyphed by dark-browed priests of Isis, have those urgent words formed the burden! Many an old Crusader, panting in his sultry camp among the hot ravines of Palestine, has listened, while some monk or mass-priest read out, in nasal sing-song tones, the contents of a letter in queer French or queerer Latin, calling upon the good lord to come home before his lands should be quite laid waste, his wife quite forgotten him, and his vassals be quite beggared by the encroachments of greedy neighbour and needy king. To-day, to-morrow, the same summons will be flashed along the telegraph wires, bidding laggards to come home lest worst betide; and the second column of the *Times* will adjure the lurkers within the Cave of Adullam to return, and let by-gones be by-gones.

In this strain it was that Ruth Morgan wrote to her brother, now making great progress in his parliamentary campaign. Letter after letter did she pen, begging and praying him to come back. It was not, she said, that any object of his could be devoid of interest to her; but though she entered keenly into all his hopes with regard to public life, there were other things at stake more important still. Why not, since matters were going so pleasantly in Oakshire, why not leave the affair in the hands of Mr Sharples, the agent, and come back to Shellton and Flora Hastings? It would be better—indeed, it would. Ruth had nothing to say against dear Flora—but—but why did not William leave the electioneering tactics to the practised skill of Mr Sharples, and come back to look after his own?

There was, however, one fatal disadvantage under which Ruth Morgan laboured in this well-meant effort to call back her brother to the side of his betrothed. She could not bring herself to accuse Miss Hastings of levity, or of fickleness; and something seemed to warn her against the mention of Lord Ullswater's name. To occasion a possible quarrel between her brother and Flora, to give Flora, when she should be his wife, cause to hate her—these were contingencies from which Ruth shrank as she would have shrunk from deadly sin. It would break her heart, she felt, were her brother to become estranged from her—the last living thing she had to love in the world. And she was wise enough to know how very difficult it is for a brother's kindly feelings to remain unaltered towards a sister whom his wife dislikes. She could not bear to run such a risk as that. It was the one spark of selfishness she had left in her, poor girl, tried and tested as she had been in the fire of lifelong suffering, but to make an enemy of William's wife was more than she could venture to do, even for William's sake.

She knew her brother—did Ruth Morgan, and understood his character in that tacit way in which we see, without owning it, the faults and foibles of those who are very dear to us. He was fond of his invalid sister, but very much of this fondness was due to habit. William Morgan's was not a nature in which family affections could take deep root. Her influence would be but a feather-weight in the balance, should Flora be her foe; and, to do Ruth simple justice, she would not, had that influence been tenfold, have exerted it at the peril of bringing disunion into her brother's household. To charge Flora with unfaithfulness, was too stern a duty for Ruth not to shirk it as long as evasion was possible.

And was it a duty at all, the little casuist pleaded to herself in the long wakeful hours of the night? Perhaps not; indeed, certainly not, for was there not the probability of an error in judgment on her part, and had she not done Miss Hastings, and Lord Ullswater also, for the matter of that, grievous wrong by her over-ready suspicions? Nothing was more likely. Was it a sin for a high-spirited girl like Flora to take pleasure in the conversation of so accomplished a man as Lord Ullswater? Ought she to be expected to mope like a caged bird robbed of its mate, or to immure herself like a nun, because William Morgan chose to canvass Oakshire? If her visits to the abbey were neither very many nor very long, was it just to blame her for not caring to pass long afternoons in the society of a sickly, crooked thing like her poor stupid self, and a prim, proud old dame like dear, kind, quaint Lady Harriet? Ruth was quite angry with herself for expecting any more attention from her lovely neighbour than that lovely neighbour thought it proper to bestow.

So Ruth Morgan, in her voluminous but somewhat one-sided correspondence with her busy brother, was forced to appear in the false light of a feminine busybody, who made a fuss for no good reason, and who was importunate without shewing cause for such importunity. And, indeed, it is doubtful if William Morgan ever read the crossings of her letters, or did more than skim hurriedly over the salient features of each successive epistle. As for coming back to Shellton just then, that was absurd, as anybody with the commonest knowledge of the world, anybody, indeed, but poor Ruth, must have known. It was the crisis of the election.

For the member for Oakshire was dead. Poor Colonel Seymour, who had long lain in desperate case on his sick-bed at one of the spas in Germany, was dead at last, and those who had waited for some impatient weeks for the reversion of the colonel's shoes, politically speaking, were now jostling and battling to win the widowed constituency of the shire. The Conflagrative Club had suddenly sent down their best man, well supplied with professional assistance, and had tried to carry the county with a rush.

The short notes which Ruth received from her brother were very hopeful in their spirit. He had been first in the field; he had taken pledges of support from crowds of influential electors. Overflowing audiences in all sorts of halls and assembly-rooms had cheered him, and waved handkerchiefs at him, and shaken hands with him till his right arm ached under the infliction. Privately and publicly, his backers were confident of success. Sharples, his man, was twice as good and safe a Mephistopheles as the Conflagrative agent, who had already fallen into one or two pitfalls of his opponent's digging. The duke's influence was on the other side, of course, but the duke had been so ill advised as to issue a high-handed ukase to his tenantry, pretty bluntly bidding them choose between their farms and their consciences; and all the papers were hard at work in fitting a well-deserved fool's cap upon his Grace's head, for such unpardonable want of tact. Morgan must win; so every dead-wall in Oakshire declared in giant capitals, and the voices of the living took up the cry.

There is a hackneyed French proverb which declares that the lucky at play will be unlucky in

love, and *vice versa*. Perhaps it is scarcely possible to give full attention to two such incongruous pursuits at one time, but, at any rate, in whatever peril of shipwreck might be Fortunatus Morgan's prospects of matrimonial felicity, he was on the high tide of political prosperity. The Right Honourable Robert rubbed his sleek white palms together with dry official gleefulness as he heard of and from his son-in-law to be. Mrs Hastings was pleased too. It would look so much better in that column of fashionable intelligence where 'marriages in high-life' find a niche, the announcement of the nuptials of her daughter with William Morgan, Esq., M.P. for Oakshire, and a Lord of the Treasury, than if there were no tag to the bridegroom's name other than his territorial possessions in England and Wales.

The writ was to be issued on such a day, the nomination to take place on such another, and then came the poll and the tug of war. But Fortunatus was quite sure that he could get through the ceremony, the chairing, and speech-making and nonsense, and be back at Shellton in time for the great picnic, so called, at St Pagans on the 4th. That was reckoned as an engagement.

For this nominal picnic, an unwonted amount of company had been invited to spend a few days at the abbey. Lady Harriet, wishing to please her nephew, but groaning over every note she penned in her stiff, neat handwriting, had asked two or three families that were known to possess agreeable daughters, by way of enlivening the dull old pile during the short stay of the guests who came at Lord Ulswater's invitation, and who were rare birds worth the catching.

Some half-dozen of London men, and no more, had Lord Ulswater asked to his house, but these were the very chieftest dandies of Dandydom, the sublimated cream of society. Some were of the Eleusis Club, but not all. The Eleusinians were Lord Wyatt, Tregooze, and Chirper of the Life Guards. The outsiders of that jealously guarded institution were men of great social note—Gunnelsley Fitzgeorge; Lord Macdirk, old Lord Kilsporran's eldest son; and Sir Harry Bletchley, who was so rich that he required auditors and actuaries to examine the accounts of the land-stewards and agents for his vast Yorkshire estates; even as did that Oakshire duke against whom Fortunatus Morgan was doing fierce battle.

To have secured the presence of these young men, was no trifling triumph. Few, indeed, were the mansions (especially just then, at the finish of the London season, when even the best trained of fashionable hacks are disposed to kick at the restraints of the polite world, and run riot on the moors or on the Alps) where these exceptional prize-flowers of Mayfair would have been beguiled to visit. They knew their value, did Chirper, and Sir Harry, and Fitzgeorge, and had no desire to make themselves cheap by indiscriminate acceptance of hospitality. There were not, as most of them said with perfect truth, ten country-houses in Britain where any one of them would have gone just then; or half-a-dozen men who could have got them down to a glum old jail on a cliff, to be caged with a fossil old maid of quality, and a poor dying girl, with a crooked spine and without a grandfather, whose wistful face made a fellow disagreeably thoughtful. But John Carnac, rich or poor, was one of those half-dozen men; they could not refuse him.

The dovecots of Shellton Manor were fluttered by the arrival or expectation of these very fine birds, these fancy-pigeons of a dainty breed, at St Pagans. Crashaw and others, his chums, grew a little nervous and doubtful of retaining their influence over young Warburton and the like, as well as of their own standing in the eyes of the unsophisticated young ladies from remote counties; for swells differ as much as diamonds do, and some are sure to outsparkle others. It seems hard, at first sight, to say why Crashaw of the Blues should feel as if he had lost four inches of his stature, as if his whiskers and tawny moustaches were getting limp, and his shoulders round, and his boots dim, at the prospect of meeting that other carpet-knight, Chirper of the Life Guards.

Crashaw was a fine-looking, honourable fellow, of an old stock, and respected in his regiment; but he could not swim in such waters as those in which Chirper, superb golden-mailed fish of the newest fashion, deigned to agitate his amber fins, and bask, aureous, in the sun. Chirper was very handsome, and great ladies petted him, and he was to be a lord, and would have as much of an ancient estate as the Jews could spare him.

But Captain Crashaw knew very well that it was not because Lieutenant Chirper was heir to the barony of Torporley, or on account of his dark eyes and ambrosial curls, or stag-like head, or the delicacy of his hands and feet, remarkable in a man of his inches, or even because he would perhaps save three or four thousand a year out of the fire of usurious interest, that Chirper was to him as Lombard Street to a China orange. Had that fascinating youth been as ugly as sin, and as poor as Job, and with no more connection with the British or any other aristocracy than Georges Dandin had, he would still have been of a higher water than Crashaw, flattening his nose against the bay-windows of choicer clubs—welcome at more palatial dwellings. There is no certain footrule whereby to measure the social rank of men and women; and Crashaw knew well enough that even if old Sir Marmaduke and his sons should die, and the baronetcy, and the Hall, and all the Northamptonshire property devolve upon his own insolvent head, he must still be content all his life long to play second-fiddle to Chirper.

'Why on earth has John asked these people? What am I to do with them? How am I to amuse them?' Lady Harriet asked, very ruefully, five or six times over, of her visitor Ruth. The old lady went about on hospitable thoughts intent, wrinkling and knitting her brows over the necessary preparations for receiving such guests in that neglected house, whose cold hearths were all unused to be surrounded by company. For all that, Lady Harriet was proud, in her secret heart, to entertain such pilgrims—pilgrims whose sandals were sure to be of the newest mode, and their staves of exquisite workmanship, and their wallets dainty toys, and the gourds at their sides gold-stoppered essence-flasks, redolent of the freshest perfume from Paris, and the very scallop-shell in their hats a jewel of price. The fashionable intelligencers of the press would chronicle the names of the distinguished sojourners at St Pagans, and many of Lady Harriet's old friends would read and envy. There was balm in that idea, for much trouble and pain.

Meanwhile, although Lord Ulswater merely laughed when his aunt tried to consult him on the subject of her domestic difficulties, and carelessly

rejoined that his friends must rough it, and that it would do Chirper and Macdirk good to mortify their flesh on a plain British diet, either he was better than his word, or some fairy watched over the credit of the mansion ; for temporary servants, new furniture, carriages and horses, wine, hothouse flowers, and a portable conservatory to put them in, decorators, and all sorts of cunning artists, glided into the abbey day by day, and did wonders for its embellishment. Presently, there came pale, resolute gentlemen, who wore earrings, and spoke broken English, and anon appeared in flat cooks' caps and uniforms of white linen, and took the kitchens by storm. The preparations for the picnic went steadily on, and still Ruth Morgan's letters to her brother were filled with the same cry—‘Come back, come back !’

#### S A N C T U A R Y.

THE institution of sanctuary is probably older than the time of Moses ; certainly it is as old. In the same chapter of the book of Exodus in which it is written : ‘He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death,’ it is written : ‘And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand ; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.’ This general statement is explained elsewhere to mean, that persons who were guilty of what is now called ‘manslaughter,’ might, by taking refuge in certain known places, be safe from ‘the avenger of blood.’ Certain conditions were imposed, of which one was, that the refugee should not quit the city of refuge till the death of the high-priest, when grief for the public loss was supposed to swallow up all private resentments. He must also, ‘at the entering of the gate of the city,’ declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city ; a practice which was embodied in the sanctuary regulations of after-times. On hearing the demand for protection, the magistrates were bound to try the applicant according to the law laid down by Moses, to see if his offence had been murder or manslaughter. The avenger of blood appeared as prosecutor, and if he made out his case for murder, the refugee was given up, even though he had clung to the altar. If, by the judgment of ‘the congregation,’ the offence was declared to be only manslaughter, the offender was taken back to the city of refuge, where he was allowed to remain as a prisoner at large till the death of the high-priest, after which he could return to his home and property. If, however, he came out before that time, he might be slain with impunity.

After the Jewish civilisation had passed away, the principle of sanctuary was conserved in various forms, and we find accordingly a system more or less elaborate prevailing amongst all men down to quite modern times.

Soon after the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity, all places of public worship were looked upon as so sacred that a criminal fleeing to any of them was safe, no matter what his crime. The object in this case was to avoid the effects of sudden resentment overtaking the criminal before

he could pay the *wehrgeld*, or protection-money, which was fixed by a known standard according to the rank of the slain. This was an essential departure from the Jewish principle, which allowed of no refuge for the wilful slayer of blood. Those only who killed a man unwittingly, without having hated him aforetime, were admitted to the protection of the cities of refuge ; but any one, murderer as well as accidental manslayer, was admitted on demand to the privilege of Christian sanctuary. ‘The peace of the church’ was in Christian lands looked upon as more sacred than ‘the peace of our Lord the King,’ and it was allowed, therefore, to cover even the worst criminals. At this early time, the rule was, that the refugee might stay in the church thirty days, providing himself with sustenance, after which he was given over to his friends unhurt.

In England, however, where the institution of sanctuary was coeval with Christianity, a modification of this monstrous regulation was early introduced. A criminal fleeing to a church for refuge, was compelled, like the Jew, who had ‘to declare his cause in the ears of the elders of the city,’ to declare that he came because his life was in danger, and also to confess that he had committed felony. If he failed to do this to the guardians of the church, he might be dragged without ceremony from the sanctuary ; but if he complied with the conditions, he was at liberty to remain, providing his own food, during a period of forty days. Within that time, he was obliged, having already confessed generally that he had been guilty of felony, to confess more particularly before the coroner, who was bound to attend on his requisition, the nature of his offence. Upon hearing this, the coroner accepted the man’s abjuration, or voluntary banishment, in full discharge of all crimes and misdemeanours committed up to that time. Protection was afforded to the criminal as soon as he had taken the oath of abjuration, and on condition of his going with a cross in his hand, and with all convenient haste, to a seaport assigned by the coroner, there embarking for some foreign land, from which he swore never to return without leave had from the king. If he did return, he might be slain with impunity ; if he were slain in the sanctuary, or on the road to the seaport assigned to him, his slayer was punished as a murderer. By abjuring, however, a man’s blood was attainted, and his property was forfeited, not to the family of the man he had injured, but to the crown.

Sacrilege and high treason were crimes of so high a nature—higher, in the opinion of our forefathers, than murder, rape, theft, or arson—that they were held not to be covered by sanctuary ; and with regard to high treason, it was decided, in the case of Humphry Stafford (temp. Henry VII.), that no sanctuary could obtain by prescription the right to protect traitors. Nothing short of an absolute grant by royal charter could confer so great a privilege, ‘because it so materially touched the King’s prerogative.’ There were, however, places to which even this right was attached by charter. Westminster was one of them, having received fullest sanctuary charters from two kings of the Heptarchy, and another, from which the following extract is made, from Edward the Confessor : ‘I order and establish for ever, that what person, of what condition or estate soever he be, from whence soever he come, or for what offence or cause it be, either for his refuge into the said

holy place, he be assured of his life, liberty, and limbs. And over this I forbid, under the pain of everlasting damnation, that no minister of mine, or of my successors, intermeddle them with any the goods, lands, or possessions of the said persons taking the said sanctuary. . . . And whosoever presumes or doth contrary to this my graunt, I will he lose his name, worship, dignity, and power, and that with the great traitor Judas, that betrayed our Saviour, he be in the everlasting fire of hell; and I will and ordain that this my graunt endure as long as there remaineth in England either love or dread of Christian name.'

It seems that the Abbot of Westminster, not content with having the privilege of sanctuary within the church and its immediate surroundings, in the year 1262 claimed the like privilege for all places, no matter how remote, that belonged to the abbey. The result was a lawsuit in the Court of Exchequer between the corporation of London and the abbot, in which it was decided that the sheriffs of London had a right to enter the town of Westminster up to the very gates of the abbey, and into all houses belonging to the abbot elsewhere over the whole county; and in default of an answer to summonses, to distrain his tenants of all sorts. The abbot also attempted, about this time, to extend the privilege of sanctuary to debtors, and to other cases besides felony; but on review of the charter, though that would seem to favour the claim, all the judges gave it as their opinion that the sanctuary was for felons only. Later on, however, this privilege was successfully claimed in this way; it was said that as imprisonment was the punishment for debt, and long imprisonment might endanger life, therefore any one who fled to the sanctuary, being pursued for debt, might be deemed to be *in periculo vite*, and consequently had a right to protection. This abuse of the privilege was allowed in spite of the law, and attached to other chartered sanctuaries besides Westminster.

If a man fled to one of the chartered sanctuaries, as Westminster, or St Martin's le Grand, he might remain there undisturbed for life, no matter what his crime; and he was not obliged, as in the case of fleeing to an ordinary church, to abjure within forty days. He might, however, abjure if he chose; and if he did, the coroner was bound to grant him his demand. There were many of these chartered sanctuaries in different parts of England, the most famous, besides those of Westminster, St Martin's le Grand, and Whitefriars, London, being at Wells, Norwich, York, Manchester, Derby, Lancaster, and Northampton.

The charter to St Martin's le Grand was given by William the Conqueror to 'the canons serving God day and night,' and included the church and college of St Martin and the precincts of the same, upon which were bestowed privileges nearly as large as those belonging to Westminster. Whitefriars, or, as it was better known in its latter days, Alsatia, was an establishment of the Carmelites or Whitefriars, founded by Sir Patrick Grey in 1241. Edward I. gave the friars the plot of ground in Fleet Street, which is now contained between Salisbury Street and the Temple, and Fleet Street and the Thames, and in his reign, Courtney, Earl of Devonshire, rebuilt the college. This place is perhaps more notorious than the other two above mentioned, because of the prominence into which it was brought in the time of 'the Merry Monarch,' and because of the scenes which have been laid in

it by popular authors, from Shadwell to Sir Walter Scott, and from Sir Walter to the present time. Historically considered, however, it is not so famous as either St Martin's or Westminster. Of the former it is recorded, that in September 1442, an officer was conducting a prisoner from Newgate to Guildhall, when, abreast of Panyer Alley, five of the prisoner's friends rushed out and rescued the man, and brought him to the west door of the St Martin's Church, claiming protection. The sheriffs of London came with a strong force, and took the prisoner and his five friends out, and led them with chains round their necks to Newgate. Hereupon, the dean and chapter complained to the king; and though John Carpenter, the common clerk of the city, when the matter was gone into in the Star Chamber, 'offered to lose his livelihood if that church had more immunity than the least church in London,' the king ordered the men to be sent back to St Martin's, 'there to abide freely, as in a place having franchises, whiles them liked.'

There are several memorable instances of violation of the sanctuary of Westminster. One occurred on 11th August 1378, when John Schakel and Robert Haule, who had fled thither from the Tower, were pursued by Sir Alan Buxhill and Sir Ralph Ferrers with fifty armed men, who dragged the refugees from the altar, and killed Haule in the choir during the celebration of mass. The violators of sanctuary were excommunicated, and, we must suppose, came in for their share of the good things promised to them by Edward the Confessor in his charter to the abbey. The abbot complained of the outrage in the next parliament, and the rights of the abbey were confirmed.

The most memorable claim of sanctuary ever preferred at Westminster was that of Queen Elizabeth, widow of Edward IV., who took refuge there with her son from the malice of 'Crookbacked Richard.' The account given by Speed of the debate at the Council Board, whether or not it would be justifiable to take the refugees out of sanctuary, is very interesting, and throws much light on the nature of sanctuaries, and the opinion men then had of them. It was contended that the refugees had no right to sanctuary, not having committed any felony, or being in fear of their lives; that the child certainly was unable to aver any legal claim, and that it was a factious abuse of the privilege for the queen to go there. Some advocated the forcible taking of the Duke of York from his mother, a course which the Archbishop of York vehemently reprehended, but suggested persuasion as the means to be first tried to induce the queen to give up the child. How he succeeded, is well known, and there was no violation of sanctuary.

The Duke of Buckingham, in the course of the debate, said: 'Yet will I not say nay, but that it is a deed of pity, that such men as the sea, or their evil debtors have brought in poverty, should have some place of liberty to keep their bodies out of the danger of their cruel creditors. And also, if the crown happen (as it hath done) to come in question, while either part taketh other as traitors, I like well there be some places of refuge for both. But as for thieves, of which these places be full, and which never fall from the craft after they once fall thereunto, it is pity the sanctuary should serve them, and much more man-quellers, whom God bid to take from the altar and kill them, if their murder were wilful.'

The above extract shews the kind of men who were dwellers in sanctuary, and who were the terror of all peaceable citizens. Henry VIII. was the first to clip their wings. In the eleventh year of his reign, the whole question was brought before the Privy Council, and the king being present, said he doubted if ancient kings and popes meant to give privilege in cases of murder and felony done by sanctuary-men out of sanctuary, and in the hope of getting to sanctuary again; and he resolved to reduce the privilege to its original compass. Wolsey and the Abbot of Westminster, however, tried a piece of patchwork, which failed utterly: they made all sanctuary-persons take an oath that they would not do treason or felony anywhere *sub spe reducti*; but this acted only as a stimulus to the bad to become worse, and the outrages by sanctuary-men who fled again to their refuge ever grew more intolerable. In the 21st Henry VIII., an act was passed ordering murderers and felons in sanctuary, who ought by law to abjure, to be marked on the braun of the thumb with an A, after confession and before abjuration; and ordering that those who ought to abjure and did not go within the time allowed by the coroner, were to be taken out of sanctuary, and proceeded against according to law. It seems that this enactment led to the expatriation of so many skilled artisans, that it was found necessary to substitute another act for it, the new act providing that instead of abjuring the realm, sanctuary-men should abjure their liberty to go free within it, and should abide for life, 'as a sanctuary-person abjured,' in some refuge appointed by the coroner. Such persons to be burned in the hand, and if they came out of sanctuary, to suffer death as an abjured person returning to the kingdom. By an act passed in the 27th Henry VIII., sanctuary-persons were ordered to wear badges, were forbidden to carry arms, and to be abroad in the sanctuary before sunrise or after sunset. Five years later, sanctuary was restricted to parish churches and churchyards, and to a few places, including Westminster, specially mentioned; but even these were declared henceforth incapable of protecting those who were guilty of murder, rape, burglary, highway robbery, housebreaking, church-breaking, and arson. The numbers in sanctuary at any one time were also restricted, and the inmates were bound to answer to a daily roll-call.

Even with these restrictions, privilege of sanctuary was found, as time went on, to be altogether intolerable; and by 21st Jac. I. c. 28, all such privilege, and abjuration consequent thereupon, was utterly taken away and abolished; but it may well be imagined, that though legal privilege was taken away from sanctuary precincts, it was not possible by merely passing an act to give the act free course in places that for centuries had defied it. As a matter of fact, long after the abolition of legal sanctuary, the old refugees were the haunts of men whom fear of the law made desperate; and it was seldom that the officers of justice ventured to execute a warrant or to serve a summons among 'the bravoes of Alsacia,' the birds in St Martin's nest, the 'freemen' of the Borough, or the boys of 'Westminster Knoll.' Modern street improvements have been the best removers of sanctuary nuisances. Westminster Hospital stands on the site of part of the old sanctuary, which was pulled down in 1775; the Post-office represents St Martin's le Grand; Alsacia does not survive in

the Salisbury Hotel and Farmers' Club; and the 'liberties' of the Mint, the Savoy, and other sanctuary-places are things of the past.

### G U R T H A.

#### IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER IV.

GURTHA, to her own surprise, was tolerably content to remain at Chevala. She was kept fully occupied and amused. The young master of Chevala was the only person there who annoyed her, or of whom, after the first few days, she felt afraid. Mrs Garstone, the motherless girl soon loved; the girls she liked well enough, but found insipid; she and they had nothing in common. She could neither play, sing, nor dance; of the new novels and periodicals she had not even heard; the books she had read and enthusiastically enjoyed were such old-fashioned things as Adela and Mildred, in their turn, had not even heard of. If only Mr Garstone would have ignored her, Gurtha would have been wonderfully at ease. When Mrs Garstone did not want her at Scarmouth, when milliners and dressmakers did not torment her in the house, and when she was not well mounted, and in a borrowed habit, scouring the very beautiful, soft, and wooded country which made the neighbourhood of Chevala such a contrast to that of the Grange, she found her way to the library, ensconced herself in a nook of the bay-window, and, half-hidden by its hangings, dropped deep into a new world of wonderful beauty and fascination, the pages of the poets, old and new. If only Mr Garstone would have ignored her—would have let her alone—would not have tried to make her talk about what she read! If he was in the room with her, she always felt that she could not get out of the range of his eyes. If she got up to leave a room, he seemed to know she did so without looking at her, as he rose to open the door. When she entered a room where he was, he always greeted her with some kind speech. Somehow, she felt always under his observation, and as if no defect in her—of dress, speech, person, or behaviour—escaped his keen eyes. The fact was, she was morbidly self-conscious where Mr Garstone was concerned; he was little more than ordinarily courteous; he wished to be kind; he wished to find out what sort of a girl this was—how she could be influenced for good. Young Mr Garstone of Chevala was a philanthropist; and in his intercourse with women, perhaps, in part, because he had, when very young, been called to take his father's place towards mother and sisters, he assumed a protecting kindness in his courtesy, was what Lady Duff Gordon tells us her servant called (I forget whom, and remember only the beautiful phrase) 'a brother of girls.' He knew enough of Gurtha's brother to have the poorest opinion of his character and conduct, and the profoundest pity for any woman in his power.

For a few days, Gurtha believed that she disliked Mr Garstone, and that he despised and ridiculed her; but this belief only lasted a few days. Then she began to think him kind, and to feel grateful for his kindness, although still uneasy under it. She was very sensitive as to his looks and words—found herself pondering over them afterwards. She wondered what she could do to be like his sisters, and, if she were like them, whether he would be as fond of her as he was of them. She became very patient under the hands of their maid, even asking, quite

humbly, to have her dress and hair arranged like theirs.

'But that won't suit your style, miss,' that young person would say, and be quite touched by the melancholy despondency her verdict created. As she said in the servants-hall: 'I do believe that handsome Miss Trestrail thinks herself positively ugly, because her skin isn't as white and her hair as straight and smooth as our young ladies'!—'What wouldn't most London ladies give for her colour, her hair and her eyes, and, for that matter, her figure!' a footman, who thought himself *au courant* of London-life, remarked.—'It's on horseback I like to see her,' said the head-groom; 'why she sits *Black Prince* as if she and he were cut out of one block!'

Meanwhile, poor Gurtha was utterly unconscious of being an object of admiration; took all observation as censure or ridicule, and while self-conscious, was only conscious of defects and faults. She could not be ignorant that preparations for travelling were going on at Chevala; she heard continually about travelling-dresses, travelling-trunks, guides, maps, and routes; also about a certain Edith Wintower, who was expected at Chevala soon, and who, there seemed to be some hope, might be persuaded to go abroad with the Garstones. She heard of Germany, Switzerland, Italy, but nothing about 'Paris' or 'school' words that would at once have roused her suspicion. Somehow, she had grown to have a quiet confidence in the Garstones; she did not think they would enter into a plot against her—would either deceive her, or allow her to be deceived. The soft and sleepy atmosphere of Chevala, which was inland, rather in a hollow, and belted round by woods, contrasted greatly with the brisk sharpness of that of the Windy Grange, and made itself felt by Gurtha; she was soothed and lulled into a sort of lotus-eating languor. She was a good deal altered and toned down when she had been a few weeks at Chevala, for the few days were run on to a few weeks, and she had hardly noticed the lapse of time. It was pleasant in a half-dream to think of Michael and the Cove, and all the old familiar life; but, at present, she had no desire to return to these things. She did not forget her promise to write to Michael, but she did not find it easy to get her letters to him. The post-office nearest Chevala was a long distance off. A mounted messenger daily rode over to the post-village with a locked letter-bag, the contents of which underwent inspection by Mrs Garstone before being sent off. Two or three times, Gurtha had herself posted letters to Michael on her rides, after having carried them in the pocket of her habit in vain for many days. On these occasions, she had fancied that Mr Garstone looked gravely displeased. Once—the last time—he had asked her why she troubled herself with her letters, instead of sending them with his mother's. She had answered only that she preferred posting them herself, and she had blushed hotly; but gentle Mildred had whispered to her brother: 'I daresay the letters are only to her brother, or the old housekeeper; but she writes such a shocking scrawl, poor child, and is so dreadfully conscious of it, that I fancy she can't bear to run the risk of her letters being seen.'

At last there came a time when a series of accidents—weather, other engagements, and so on—made it for many days impossible for Gurtha to go near the post. Michael would be getting desperate,

she thought might even be coming to Chevala, to see that she had not been carried off; and it would be so awkward for Michael to come to Chevala! She slipped a letter to Michael into the post-bag, among the others, and trusted that, by some happy accident, it might escape observation, question, and comment. She was in her usual half-hidden nook in the library when Mrs Garstone, that afternoon, went through her usual inspection of the contents of the letter-bag. 'Mildred, you write too often to Rose Arkwright; once a week would be often enough to answer every good purpose: I don't approve of such tremendous friendships.—Adela, I think you shouldn't have written again to Walter till you had heard again. A young girl should be maidenly and backward to her lover even in correspondence. I don't see why you should write two letters for his one.'

'I promised to, mamma. Walter works so very hard, and I have nothing to do.'

'I hope he does work "so very hard;" young men now-a-days have a great knack of believing themselves very hardworked. If it's true that you have nothing to do, I'm sorry for you, and I'll find you something.'

'I mean nothing comparatively, mamma.'

'I dare say, if the truth were known, child, your day is about as well occupied as his.—But, anyway, no good comes of these unreasonably close correspondences; they lead to the expression of a great deal of false and high-flown sentiment.'

Now it came to Gurtha's turn. 'Mr Michael Petcowrie! Who's he? Who wrote this letter? Why is it here? Oh, it is from one of the servants, I suppose. Katherine has a lover, I believe. What a horrid scrawl she writes! It doesn't say much for your teaching, Mildred, my dear.'

'That is my letter,' said Gurtha sturdily, turning scarlet; blushing for her own handwriting more than for anything else, as she came out of her nook and stood by the table.

'Do you mind telling me who this person is to whom it is addressed, my dear?'

'An old friend of mine—my only friend.'

'What is this friend of yours?' asked Mrs Garstone, calling to mind some vague warning about 'a low rascally fisher-fellow' that she had received from Edgar.

'Well,' answered Gurtha, 'he is only a fisherman, but still he is much more of a gentleman than—'

'Than?'

'Than any other man I ever saw—that is, till I came here. Of course, Mr Garstone is really a gentleman, but Edgar is not, nor are any of his friends; while my friend Michael is—'

'What do you mean by being a gentleman?'

'I call Michael a gentleman, because—because he is brave—because I know he couldn't tell a lie—because he is gentle to women and children—because he doesn't use foul language.'

'Bravo!' said Mr Garstone; he had entered the room for a moment to fetch something, just in time to hear those words, but left it again directly.

'You are a true-hearted, brave-spirited girl,' said Mrs Garstone affectionately; 'but though I like a girl to stand up bravely for her friends, it should not be at the expense of her relatives. You and your brother don't suit each other, and I daresay there are faults on both sides; but you must not speak of him harshly. Now, about this letter—I am sorry to disappoint you,

my child, very sorry, but I cannot let it go. I have no doubt the letter is perfectly innocent and harmless; but while you are under my roof, I am answerable for you to your legal and natural guardian, your brother.—Take back the letter, child; I can't send it.' She then turned to other things.

'If you can't send it, then I must take it—it must go.' This Gurtha said after she had stood silent a few moments, flushing and trembling. She said it meditatively, not defiantly.

'Of course, of course,' assented Mrs Garstone, too deeply interested in reading the addresses on her son's letters to know what she had assented, and the girl knew she had not heard.

Gurtha lost no time in going to her own room, and from thence descending to the shrubbery, dressed for walking. She had not gone far when she was met by Mr Garstone.

'May I inquire where you are going?'

'Am I a prisoner? Are you my jailer?' she asked rudely, annoyed at being seen, especially annoyed at being seen by Mr Garstone.

'Certainly not, Miss Trestrail. Excuse my having questioned you.' He drew aside to let her pass, but she lingered.

'I didn't mean to be rude. You may ask where I am going—you may know, any one may know, I am going to the post-office with this letter.'

'Do you know how far off the post-office is?'

'No; but I don't care. You can tell me if there is any nearer way than the way I have ridden there.'

'Why not send your letter with my mother's?'

'She wouldn't let it go with hers.'

A pause.

'Are you going to tell me if there is a nearer way?'

'There is; but it is full five miles even by that nearer way.'

'That is nothing—I don't care if it is ten.'

'It is a most lonely road, and the evening will be closing in directly; it is dark already in the firwood you'll have to go through.'

'What does that matter?—Tell me which way to start, please. I'm neither afraid of the loneliness nor the dark.'

'But I am for you, Miss Trestrail. You are guest in a house of which I am master; I cannot consent to your going on such an expedition; I forbid it. It is a thing quite out of the question.'

The tone was so different from anything she was accustomed to; so gentle in its firmness, and firm in its gentleness, and he seemed so completely to take obedience for granted, that Gurtha was impressed.

'What is to be done, then? My letter must and shall go. If your mother won't send it, and you won't let me take it, *how* is it to go?'

'Will you trust it to me? I am going to ride in the direction of the post-village; or rather, I can take the village on my way to the place I am going to.'

She looked him in the face.

'You had better read the address before you promise to post the letter,' she said. 'If you promise to post it, I trust it to you. Mind,' she added, 'I trust it to you. But I don't want to deceive you into doing a thing you don't think right to do. I'd rather disobey you, Mr Garstone, and walk to the post myself, than do that!'

Having read the address, he looked grave.

'I wish you were my sister, my poor girl,' he said.

'I wish I were. But why do you wish so?'

'Because I should like to be able to take care of you as I do of my sisters. For that matter, I might almost be your father, child.—You are an honest, noble-minded girl, and have no notion how to take care of yourself: you don't even know when you're in danger.'

'I should like to have a brother to be kind to me as you are to your sisters. But Michael is as kind to me as a brother, and I can't be in any kind of danger from him.—You are going to post my letter?'—quite coaxingly she asked that.

'Yes, unless I get your permission not to post it.'

'That you won't get. I promised to write often. Poor Michael! I daresay he has been up to Thorney-cliff Village two or three times already to ask for this letter. I shouldn't mind you reading that letter, every word of it—except,' here she blushed deeply, 'that it is so badly written and spelled. It is only to tell Michael I am still here, and tolerably contented; but that I miss him, and want to be on the beach with him again; that I hope he learns his lessons, and has had good-luck in his fishing.—I think that's every word of it, Mr Garstone!'

'Learns his lessons!' echoed Mr Garstone, with an air of relief. 'Your friend is only a little boy, then? I thought—I feared that it was this friend whom you were defending so warmly to my mother just now!'

'So it was. Michael isn't a little boy; he's a great big fellow. He's too big! he's a head taller than you! He's twenty-two. He's so strong, and good, and handsome. Poor dear old Michael! He works so hard at his lessons, to please me, and he's so stupid! Only at lessons, though; he's very clever in everything else.'

Her eyes and whole face were full of feeling, as she said this; she was somehow conscious of some secret injustice or infidelity of her heart towards Michael. Mr Garstone's face grew graver and graver, till, as they strolled along together, she had told him the whole history of her friendship for Michael. She told it quite simply, and she touched him by the way she dwelt upon the fact, that this young fisherman had been literally her only friend.

'You say *has been*, I am glad to notice. You have friends here now, Miss Trestrail.'

'I am very glad if I may call you my friend,' she answered; 'but I thought you would perhaps despise me for making a friend of a common fisherman.' She spoke proudly, but wistfully examined the expression of his face.

'By no means. I pity you for your friendlessness; but, at the same time, young Petcowrie being, at all events to you, what you describe him, I honour your choice of him as a friend.'

'Do you really?'

'Yes, really; and what's more difficult, I'm inclined to take for granted, on your shewing, that this Michael Petcowrie is a good, and by no means common young fellow. You've interested me in him, Miss Trestrail. But, nevertheless, as I said before, I wish you were my sister. If you were, neither this letter nor any other should go from you to him. I would see your friend, and give him for you any message you chose to send him; and then I would speak a little plain but friendly counsel to him for myself.'

More in a fatherly than even in a brotherly way, Mr Garstone explained to Gurtha a little of what

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made familiar correspondence, familiar intercourse, between herself and a young man of such different station objectionable ; telling her something of what, if he had had an interview with Michael, he would have told him, of the impossibility of keeping up such a relation as now existed between them without injury and pain resulting to them both. He understood the girl's character well enough, however, to speak lightly of the injury to her compared with that to him.

'Associating with you, Miss Trestail, treated as a friend and equal by you, the young man's head will be full of mistaken notions : women of his own class, one of whom might otherwise have made him happy, will be distasteful to him. And when you, by marriage, or some other inevitable change of life, are separated from him, he will think himself ill-used—his life will, perhaps, the best part of it, have been spoiled and wasted. Very possibly, he will take to idle and dissipated habits, and lay all the sin of his doing so to your door.'

Gurtha listened patiently, blushingly, and thoughtfully.

'You are very good,' she said, 'to take the trouble to talk to me like this. If Edgar would have done so long ago !—However,' she added, 'you will post this one letter.'

He did post that one letter for her; and before returning to Chevala that evening, he made a long round for the sole purpose of instituting some inquiries about young Petcowrie. All he heard was reassuring and satisfactory.

The next day, Edith Wintower arrived at Chevala, and Mr Garstone's thoughts were a good deal taken up with strictly personal and private interests—fluctuating hopes and fears.

#### CHAPTER V.

When Miss Wintower had been a week at Chevala, there came a great change in the weather. Till then, it had been drowsily calm, goldenly sunny ; but now a mighty storm raging fearfully on the coast, swept over the woods and down upon Chevala, making itself furiously felt even there.

As Gurtha sat and watched it, in the darkening drawing-room alone at dusk, seeing how some trees were lashed white as sea-foam, how others seemed to be stripped bare before her eyes ; as she heard even through the glass the mighty roaring of the wind in some giant firs, she tried to believe that this great storm in the outer world was the cause of the restless wild trouble of her mind.

She longed for escape now, for the sea, and the shore, and the moorland, for her untamed past life, and, as belonging to all these, for Michael ; she scorned herself for the dream she had dreamed, and the ways of slothful luxury she had fallen into.

Miss Wintower had been at Chevala a week, and by ceaseless watching of her, Gurtha had learned many things. From her bedroom window, Gurtha had watched when Edith Wintower and Mr Garstone had paced the terrace or the shrubberies, early in the morning, or late in the evening.

From some corner of the drawing-room, she had watched when Edith sang and Mr Garstone listened ; she had watched his eyes when they followed Edith ; she had thrilled at his voice when he spoke to Edith. She had drunk a subtle poison, which was now working in her blood.

Only the evening before that on which she now sat watching the storm, and brooding over the dark

trouble of her mind, she had learned all at once, at a flash, the full meaning of three words—hate, love, and jealousy.

As they were all riding home together, Miss Wintower's horse had shied, slipped, and fallen ; she, always a timid and unsafe rider, had been thrown. The injuries she had sustained were of the very slightest ; she had fallen lightly, and on the turf. But Mr Garstone's face, blanched and with dilated eyes—his voice as he exclaimed : 'Good God !' and giving his own reins to Gurtha, threw himself off his horse—the passionate tenderness of the words she heard him speak as he bent over the pale girl, and raised her in his arms—the sight of Edith's lovely head resting on his shoulder—the expression of the eyes she lifted to his as she said : 'Don't be so frightened ; I'm not hurt, Harold ; I'll mount again in a few moments'—these things were a revelation to Gurtha.

Mr Garstone had noticed some strange change of expression in the girl's face. When he had a little recovered his own self-possession, and Edith stood ready to mount again, a pale, passionate happiness in her face, leaning on his arm, he said to Gurtha : 'I'm afraid you were a good deal alarmed, Miss Trestail ; but, you see, thank God, she is almost unharmed.'

'I wish she were dead—I hate her!' muttered Gurtha between her set teeth ; but, as she spoke, she jumped out of her saddle, and insisted on exchanging horses with Miss Wintower.

'I daresay, now, he's so frightened he'll shy a hundred times between here and Chevala : he won't throw me !'

She had mounted and dashed off before any one could prevent it. No one saw her again that night ; but Mrs Garstone, when questioned, said gravely : 'She says she has a raging headache. She seems feverish. She does nothing but walk up and down the room like a wild beast in a cage. If she does not seem well in the morning, I shall send for Dr Penson.'

But next day Gurtha declared herself quite well, and did not seem very different from usual. Miss Wintower, having a slightly bruised ankle, did not come down-stairs that day. And Gurtha sat thinking that she must and would leave Chevala—that staying there suffocated her to choking—that she must and would have the old wild life again, for which alone, she told herself, she was fit.

Mr Garstone had spoken to her that morning, half in gratitude, half in reproof, about what she had done the evening before. 'Edith says it was too good of you !' To which Gurtha answered : 'It was not good at all ; and she needn't think I did it for her.'

'For whom, then ?'

'For you, because I knew you would care if she was killed, and not if I was !' Then she had left him, giving him no chance of replying.

While she sat alone here, half hidden by the window-hangings, thinking and resolving, she heard, at first as it were without hearing, the voices of Mrs Garstone and her son, talking in the conservatory. By and by, she became aware they were speaking of her.

'It is doing her the greatest injustice,' Mr Garstone was saying, 'this treating her like a child. She is a fine-natured creature, not difficult to manage by kindness. To send her to school, against her will, at her age, seems to me a piece of tyranny. The more I think of it, the worse I like

the plan. I wish I had been at home yesterday when Trestrail called.'

' You always had a soft heart, Harold, for the woes of a pretty face. But it's absolutely necessary she should go away. It's not only that her education has been so neglected, but she has got into some sort of entanglement with a young fellow of low station and bad character, and—'

' Not so fast, dear mother! ' Mr Garstone broke in, by so doing keeping Gurtha silent a few moments longer. ' Don't be guided by that rascal Trestrail's judgment. I have made inquiries about young Petcowrie, and have heard nothing but good of him. Why, he's the young fellow who saved so many lives when the *Gulda* was wrecked last winter! Their friendship's an old affair, beginning when she was almost a baby, and is, on her part at least, of a most innocent and Arcadian character.'

' Maybe so. For my part, I thoroughly like the girl, she is so honest and spirited. But what's to be the end of an affair of that kind? '

' That's the question. But I wish we had been open with her from the first.'

' Will you try your hand on her now? '

' No, mother. You may think me a puppy for saying so, but my influence is perhaps too great already—'

' Mrs Garstone, I can hear all you say! ' cried Gurtha so immediately upon those last words as to leave it doubtful whether she had heard them. She came now out of her hiding-place behind the curtains into the middle of the room, and stood right in the blaze of the great wood-fire: in her rich evening-dress, with her glowing face and kindled eyes, she looked startlingly handsome.

' The murder is out, then, and I'm glad of it,' said Mrs Garstone: ' I hate keeping secrets, and am always a bad hand at it.'

Mr Garstone felt uncomfortably conscious of his last words—had they hurt her? Probably, he thought, if she had heard, she had not understood them.

' It's quite true,' she said, turning to him. ' You could have persuaded me to anything, if you had been open with me from the first; but you didn't try.'

' You are going to be a good, sensible girl now, however,' said Mrs Garstone.—' What is the matter, child? Why are you trembling so? ' She put an arm round her, drew her to her, and kissed her.

' I don't know,' answered Gurtha. ' I am miserable. I hate everybody. I wish I were dead! I wish I had a mother! I wish I'd never been born! I wish I'd never come here! ' Having sobbed out these broken sentences, she flung herself into Mrs Garstone's arms, and burst into the wildest storm of crying that lady had ever witnessed.

At the dinner-table that day, after the servants had gone away, Mildred—not engaged Adela—began to speak of Miss Wintower. She was evidently full of girlish curiosity as to how far things had gone between her and her brother—curiosity that had been roused to the utmost by the fact, that Mr Garstone had that day requested admittance to the little up-stairs morning-room to which Miss Wintower was confined, and had been for ever so long (as Mildred expressed it) alone there with her. Mildred now tried to find out if this 'meant anything serious,' if it was all settled, and so on.

Gurtha, watching Mr Garstone's face, felt a sharp pang at her heart as she saw and understood its half-veiled happiness and exultation.

For some time, he took no notice of Mildred's hints further than just to parry them with evasive answers and innuendoes, but by and by he said with a soft seriousness peculiar to him when he was deeply moved: ' I can't jest about it, dear Mildred. I have won you a sweet sister, whom I hope you will love dearly, as she deserves. Edith has promised to be my wife.'

There fell a silence. Gurtha was conscious of a great noise in her heart or head, of flushing and paling suddenly, but no one was heeding her.

When they all rose from the table, the two girls, before leaving the room, wound their arms round their brother's neck, kissing him, fondly whispering: ' We will love her dearly—we are so glad.'

When he was free, he looked at Gurtha: she had been prevented from leaving the room by Mrs Garstone's pausing in the doorway just in front of her. Stretching out his hand to her, he said: ' I claim you for a sort of sister, Miss Trestrail. I know I have your congratulations too.'

A mist was before the girl's eyes; she hardly saw his hand, but as she felt it clasp hers, she said: ' I am sure I hope you will be always happy.' Then she snatched her hand away. ' I wish everybody would leave me alone,' she cried; and pushing all obstacles out of her path, she dashed up to her own room. The other girls had already flown up to their new sister.

' Why did you do that? ' asked his mother.

' I am so sorry for that poor child. I want her to feel that she has a friend in me. God knows how sorely she may need a brotherly friend! I don't want her to think I can care nothing for her because I love another woman better.'

' She's no child. You can't be a friend to her. The less she thinks about you, in any way, the better for her, I fancy.'

#### S P R I N G.

Now comes the Spring from southern lands;  
And looking upward from the sod,  
Sits Nature, holding empty hands,  
For fresh replenishing from God.

The birds now sing on every spray,  
That late had not one song of hope:  
To sing of love on lovely day,  
Is clearly all their vocal scope.

The brooks, too, warble as they run;  
They sing together, brook and bird,  
And always in such unison,  
'Tis often doubtful which is heard.

And ever with each other play  
The fleecy clouds in highest sphere,  
As through the dreary winter-day  
They wept together, tear for tear.

Soft winds prevail, sweet scents are rife,  
And every day fresh germs doth bring:  
More than a match for Death is Life,  
More than a match for Winter, Spring.